

## 200 YEARS TO POLITICAL ECONOMY IN VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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*This paper gives a concise overview of the development of the economic thought in Lithuania mentioning the very special event in the history of the economic science – the establishment of the Department of Political Economy in Vilnius University in 1803 as the first Department of Political Economy in the world.*

The establishment of the Political Economy Department in Vilnius University in 1803 was an incident worth attention. Moreover, to say to any economist that it was for the first time in world's science history that political economy was acknowledged as an official subject in a university syllabus seems today a wonder. But every "wonder" has its cause. Nobody doubts that at that time economic thought was at a more advanced level in England or France, but the transformation process in the education system of Vilnius University (it was reformed from Vilnius Academy managed by Jesuits to a more open educational institution) gave a good land for sowing new seeds. Most European universities at that time had the departments of cameral science for the studies of the economical issues; the ideas of political economy mainly re-

mained as part of the course of moral philosophy.

So, what were the reasons for this acknowledgment of political economy in the educational system of Lithuania?

There were several reasons for physiocracy to appear as a subject for studies at Vilnius University. Firstly, close relations of the Lithuanian nobility (and the then rector of Vilnius University J. Stroinovskis in particular) with the French physiocrats. As we know from history, a personality sometimes plays a crucial role in the process of historical events or decisions. Secondly, these ideas were acceptable for theologians. The social vision of physiocracy was strongly influenced by the natural law and religion. The doctrine of natural law and scholastics still had strong traditions in Vilnius University. The professors and

lecturers from the very beginning of Vilnius University activities (established in 1579) started developing the economic ideas in their works and lectures. Most of the authors militated for free trade, development of agriculture and industry in the country, harmony of classes. To some extent these were the preconditions for the development of the concept of physiocrats. And thirdly, the upper class of the landlords of an agricultural country as was Lithuania felt more sympathy for the teachings of physiocrats than for the economic ideas of mercantilists or A. Smith.

Jeronimas Stroinovskis was a great admirer and follower of the ideas of F. Quesnay. Since 1783 in his lectures on natural law in Vilnius University he started to propagate the economic ideas of physiocracy. In 1785 he published the book "The Science of Natural Law, Political Law, Political Economy and Law of Nations" in which he gave the basics of physiocracy and introduced the main ideas of F. Quesnay in the context of the social and economical development of Lithuania. The book became a text-book for over twenty years for students of Vilnius University. So, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the doctrine of physiocracy already started to be lectured in Vilnius University. The book of J. Stroinovskis had five editions, was translated into Russian and printed in St. Petersburg in 1809. It is worth reminding that Lithuania since 1795 was politically incorporated into Russian Empire. Though the establishment of the Department of Political Economy soon followed in Moscow University (in 1804), the ideas of physiocracy were never too popular in Russia. In France, where the ideas of F. Quesnay were well known and popular, the doctrine of physiocracy never became an official course in the study programmes of universities as it became in Vilnius University in 1803.

J. Stroinovskis in his book "The Science of Natural Law..." was not developing economic ideas himself. Introducing the ideas of F. Quesnay, he mainly opposed the concept of mercantilists and developed some ideas of natural law and private property. His book, lectures and personality indeed just opened the gates to the broad economic dispute for the following decades in Vilnius University. And that was his merit.

Among the authors and lecturers of that period (until 1832 when the tsarist government closed Vilnius University as a hothouse of national resistance), two names, Jonas Vaškevičius and Mykolas Očapovskis, are worth particular mentioning.

Jonas Vaškevičius developed the ideas of A. Smith's economic theory and was famous for liberality of his economic outlook giving opportunity for students to get acquainted with different economic schools and creed. His books were focused on separate economic issues such as banks, history of money, trade affairs and had an objective to get Lithuanian society more economically educated. He wasn't a blind follower or admirer of A. Smith and developed a dispute on various economic definitions. He considered not work itself, but utility to be a standard of value. In many places he advocated H. Storch's "civilization theory" and gave a broader understanding of productive and nonproductive work. J. Vaškevičius' book "The Science of Trade" (1830) was very popular in Lithuanian society and gave the fundamentals of various trade operations for business people. The definitions of the different levels of prices, money issues, exchange problems and many other questions were creatively discussed in the book. In 1838 appeared his book "The History of Banks", which was the main source on banking issues in Lithuania for the next hundred years. We could say

that J. Vaškevičius built a bridge between economic theories and cameral sciences in Lithuania.

M. Očapovskis was the most productive author and left a lot of works on agriculture and the economics of agriculture. Analyzing the productive activity in all spheres of economy he considered agriculture to be the most productive sphere for the economical development of Lithuania. M. Očapovskis was a zealous defender of wage-work and tried to prove for Lithuanian landlords that forced labor was unprofitable and inexpedient for both the landlords and the whole country. The lasting villeinage in Lithuanian economy was the hot point of economical discussions. Vilnius University lecturers were on the side of progressive economical reforms and openly upraised those questions in the society.

J. Vaškevičius and M. Očapovskis translated many works of the Western economists. Moreover, they both combined economic theory with economic practice (initiated the establishment of an experimental farm and a research institute at Vilnius University).

The notable historian Joachim Lelevelis started to read the course of statistics in Vilnius University. He advocated the ideas of A. Smith as well. So, by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a firm foundation for the development of economic sciences was laid in Vilnius University. In the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Vilnius University had several economic departments and became a strong source of liberal ideas.

The suppression of the rebellion against the tsarism regime in 1830–1831 was followed by the closure of Vilnius University by the Russian government. It was an evident disruption of the development of the economic thought in Lithuania. Though later appeared fragmentary publications on the economic issues, a real

rise of the economic thought started only at the beginning of the next – the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After proclamation of the independence of Lithuania (1918) Vilnius was occupied by the Polish army, but the functioning of Vilnius University was restored. Political economy was permanently lectured until World War II. The lecturers (V. Zavadskis, V. Stanevičius, S. Svenevičius) were analyzing various economic questions as well. V. Zavadskis started to develop the mathematical trend in economics, published several works on economical equilibrium and value issues. V. Stanevičius did a research on agricultural problems of Vilnius circuit.

At the same time in Kaunas University, the main institution of education and science in Lithuania in the interwar period, the economic thought started to blossom in the Lithuanian language. Such notable professors as P. Šalčius, V. Jurgutis, P. Rimka are worth an enormous appreciation for creating the economic terms and definitions in the Lithuanian language. The courses of economic theory, finance and money, statistics were followed by establishment of separate economical departments in Kaunas University. The main textbooks and numerous publications on various economical issues appeared. Discussions on the economical reforms in the country were part of everyday press.

Finally, going back to the establishment of the Department of Political Economy in Vilnius University, one should know that the development of the economic thought there started much earlier – already at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The popular book of the professor of Vilnius University Martynas Smigleckis “On Usury...” (1596) represented the ideas of the contemporary scholastics or so-called second scholastics when the medieval understanding of the main economic catego-

ries was revised and adjusted to the development of the new economic relations. M. Smigleckis started the analysis of the economic basis of exploitation and proposed reforms, comparatively radical for his time, for improvement of peasants' legal position in Lithuania. The other university lecturers (P. Skarga, A. Olizarovijus, J. Chondzinskis) discussed the unjust situation of peasants as well and emphasized its negative economical consequences for the country. As theologians, they all expressed opposition to the economic policy of mercantilism.

Interesting works on economic problems were published also by other authors in Lithuania. The book of Jonas Abramavičius "The Vision of Lithuanian..." (1595) expressed the priorities of free trade and gave very sensible insights into the price formulation policy. The book of an unknown author "Review on the Crown's Expenditure..." (1623) gave a deep insight into the economic problems of Lithuania and Poland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and encouraged the nobility to turn to the industrial development of the country. Those mature economic ideas in Lithuania at that time corresponded to the most progressive economic thought in Western Europe.

Without going into a more detailed analysis of the economic works of different authors, we would like to point out some general peculiarities of the development of the economic thought in Lithuania.

One obvious feature was its saltatory evolution including quite distinct rises and falls of the economic thought itself. It was connected with the general political and economical development of the country. The periods of political and economical upheaval, occupation from the East and sometimes from the West had a strong impact on cultural processes as well. The other peculiarity is an obvious dissociation and absence of continuity of the economic ideas of separate periods of their development. For example, during a period of one century (the 20<sup>th</sup>) we may observe three separate periods of the development of the economic thought in Lithuania: the interwar period (moreover, two universities – Vilnius and Kaunas – had no links), the soviet period and the last decade of the century. All those periods had no continuity of the economic ideas, were strongly influenced by the ideas from the East (Marxism ideology) or the West (liberal economic thought), and each time the economic science started to be developed as if all over again.

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## POLITINĖS EKONOMIJOS MOKSLO DVIEJŲ ŠIMTMEČIŲ SUKAKTIS VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETE

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Santrauka

Ekonomikos mokslo išsivadavimas iš kitų mokslų prieglobščio visur vyko iš esmės XVIII–XIX amžių bėgyje, bet tai, kad Vilniaus universitete 1803 m. buvo įkurta politinės ekonomijos katedra, yra ypatingas reiškinys ekonomikos mokslo istorijoje. Tai yra reikšminga ne tik Lietuvos mokslui: politinė ekonomija buvo išskirta iš bendro prigimtinės teisės kurso ir pirmą kartą pasaulyje aukštosios mokyklos mokymo planuose įtvirtinta kaip savarakiška mokslo disciplina. Fiziokratų teorijos tapimas akademinė disciplina ir jos išsilaikymas Vilniaus universitete net dvidešimt septynerius metus (1783–1810 m.) taip pat buvo išimtinis reiškinys Europos aukštojo mokslo istorijoje. Net Prancūzijos universitetuose žymaus F. Kenė teorija niekada nebuvo užėmusi tokios padėties.

Šiame straipsnyje pabandėme trumpai apžvelgti pagrindines šių faktų priežastis: glaudūs Lietuvos didelių ryšiai su prancūzų fiziokratais (ypatingas uoliaus F. Kenė sekėjo tuometinio Vilniaus universiteto rektoriaus J. Stroinovskio vaidmuo), dar gyvos scholastikos tradicijos Vilniaus universitete, propaguojant fiziokratams artimas prigimtinės teisės idėjas ir pagaliau tuometinių dvarininkų simpatijos radikalių reformų nereikalaujančiai pažiūrų sistemai.

Profesorius Jeronimas Stroinovskis buvo ta asmenybė, kuri atvėrė duris fiziokratų mokymui Vilniaus universitete ir savo knygoje „Prigimtinės, politinės teisės, politinės ekonomijos ir tautų teisės mokslas“ (1785) bei paskaitose nuosekliai propagavo ir aiškino fiziokratų mokymą. Politinius ir socialinius klausimus autorius plėtojo gana kūrybiškai, tačiau ekonominių klausimų jis negilino; tik nuosekliai ir suprantamai juos dėstė Lietuvos skaitytojui.

Politinės ekonomijos kursas skaitomas antrąjį ir trečiąjį XIX amžiaus dešimtmečius jau apėmė gana plačią ekonominių teorijų raidos apžvalgą. Jonas Vaškevičius, dėstęs politinės ekonomijos kursą 1824–1832 m., daug padarė, kad Lietuvą pasiektų naujos Vakarų Europos ekonominės pažiūros, ypač propagavo A. Smito ekonomines idėjas, pats parašė išsamius darbus apie prekybą, bankus. Žemės ūkio ekonomikos pagrindus Vilniaus universitete kūrė Mykolas Očapovskis. Jie abu, galima sakyti, nutiesė tiltą tarp ekonomikos teorijų ir atskirų ekonomikos mokslo šakų ir kūrė jų pagrindus Vilniaus universitete. Su universiteto uždarymu (po 1830–1831 m. sukilimo

numalšinimo) buvo iš esmės pakirstos jau tvirtai įleistos ekonomikos mokslų šakys Lietuvoje.

Antrojoje XIX a. pusėje ir XX a. pradžioje pastebimos nežymios publikacijos įvairiais ekonominiiais klausimais, tačiau ekonomikos mokslas atgijo praktiškai tik su universitetų atidarymu. Nors Vilnius buvo okupuotas šį kartą iš Vakarų (Lenkijos), bet Vilniaus universitetas (pavadintas Stepono Batoro vardu) vėl pradėjo veikti. Politinė ekonomija čia buvo dėstoma iki Antrojo pasaulinio karo, o jos dėstytojai (V. Zavadskis, V. Stanevičius) parašė keletą įdomių darbų aktualiaisiais meto ekonominiiais klausimais. V. Zavadskis jau taikė matematinius metodus savo ekonominiuose tyrinėjimuose.

Akivaizdus ekonomikos mokslo pakilimas vyko 1922 m. įkurtame Kauno universitete. Pirmą kartą Lietuvos istorijoje ekonominė terminija buvo kuriama lietuvių kalba. Profesoriai P. Šalčius, V. Jurgutis, A. Rimka tuo pačiu kūrė bendrosios ekonominės teorijos, finansų ir pinigų bei statistikos mokslų pagrindus. Šiame straipsnyje, nesileisdami į detalesnę įvairių autorių pažiūrų analizę, norėtume pažymėti, kad ekonomikos mokslas Vilniaus universitete prieš 200 metų taip pat neatsirado tuščioje vietoje. Dar porą šimtmečių anksčiau (XVI a. pabaigoje) ekonominiai klausimai buvo plačiai aptarinėjami teisės ir filosofijos kursuose, o to meto Vilniaus universiteto dėstytojai (M. Smigleckis, P. Skarga, A. Olizarovijus, J. Chondzinskis) rašė darbus, kuriuose aktyviai svarstė aktualiausias Lietuvos ūkio problemas.

Apžvelgiant ekonomikos mokslų raidą Vilniaus universitete, pažymėtina visai ekonominės minties raidai Lietuvoje būdingi tie patys jos pakilimo ir smukimo laikotarpiai, kuriuos lėmė pačios Lietuvos politinės ir ekonominės raidos ypatybės: ekonominės raidos netolygumas ir krašto okupacijų padariniai. Tai lėmė pačios ekonominės minties netolygią raidą, t.y. ryškius pakilimo ir visiško smukimo laikotarpius. Kita pažymėtina ypatybė, kad tolsniams ekonominės minties pakilimo laikotarpiams nebuvo būdingas pažiūrų tęstinumas. Išskyla tartum atskiros ekonominės minties salelės istorinėje jos raidoje, kurios netgi būdamas labai arti laiko atžvilgiu (pavyzdžiui, trys XX a. periodai: tarpukaris, tarybinis laikotarpis ir paskutinysis dešimtmetis) nepasižymi ekonominių pažiūrų perimamumu. Ir vėl, sakytume iš naujo, kuriama ekonomikos mokslo pamatai.